

recollection of why we have a 13th amendment to the Constitution prohibiting slavery. But we are talking about one of the great iniquities of our civilization. Slavery has always been a problem that we have dealt with across our centuries; but today and in countries all over the world, we are beginning to examine where it goes.

We heard the distinguished gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) recite present problems. We have heard the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE) talk about things that lead us into conditions of such abject poverty that people are made vulnerable to the whole question of being subjugated and eventually so impoverished that they end up being oppressed or exploited.

We know that many are still being trapped in trying to leave one country to improve their economic conditions, and they end up under false pretences in a forced work circumstance. Frequently, it's prostitution for young women. And for this 110th Congress, with these resolutions, H. Res. 272 and H. Res. 158, are now beginning to deal with this subject, not only in the present circumstance but examining the roots and the origins of this obnoxious, inhumane, indescribably evil circumstance in which we find men, women and children still under such oppression today.

For that reason, I am proud to stand here as the chairman of the committee that has jurisdiction over our constitutional amendments and to join with the distinguished members of the Foreign Affairs Committee who recognize that after many unsuccessful attempts, the British Parliament finally abandoned and made slavery illegal, but finally, after a great deal of effort were able to stop it. It didn't stop because we passed a law. Slavery and second-class citizenship and the denial of the rights of Americans didn't stop because we passed the 13th amendment. It didn't even stop after we passed a series of Voting Rights Acts to enforce the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments.

So here we are today, again recommending this Nation through the people's House to make certain that everyone understands how this came about, how the Atlantic slave trade was so evil and that its legacy lingers over this Nation today.

I congratulate all of the leaders of these two measures and in commemorating the legacy and remembering this great Parliamentarian from England, William Wilberforce. Many of our predecessors worked, as tirelessly as we do, through the last couple centuries to deliver on the simple promise of freedom; but guess what, it doesn't turn on us just keeping people free. A free people have to become educated. They have to work. They have to raise their family. We have to put this enormously important consideration into the context of what it means.

To be free is not free. To be free means that you can get educated to compete in a computerized technology.

It means to be able to be healthy and to live and grow to make everyone have this wonderful opportunity. It was said so then to every man and woman and child the chance, the chance, the gold shining opportunity to become whatever they could in the course of one's life.

We celebrated the life yesterday of our dearest colleague Juanita Millender-McDonald as she was memorialized in Los Angeles. What a dynamic, unusual, amazing circumstance of a young girl from Alabama transporting herself to the first elected chairwoman of color of the House Administration Committee.

These are the kinds of opportunities that are open to us, to the 43 members of the Congressional Black Caucus, who all have equally poignant stories. We have an African American chairman who had to join the Army because he could not get a job. That is existing today.

It is in that spirit of looking back and yet confronting the realities that I am so proud to join my colleagues on both sides of the aisle who have made this an important day to remember, to reflect on and to plan how we move the condition and the plight of all 300 million of our citizens forward.

I thank the gentleman from New Jersey for yielding me this time.

Mr. PAYNE. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Let me conclude once again by thanking the prime sponsor, Congressman PRTS, for this resolution and just say that as I was indicating before about a little bit about our history, it is important that we remember history. It is important that the House of Commons fought and Mr. Wilberforce would not give up his fight.

Actually, New Jersey back in 1863 passed the 13th amendment that was proposed by President Lincoln, although New Jersey did not support Lincoln in his elections. The Republicans passed the 13th amendment, but interestingly enough, the Democrats opposed this, and in the next election the Democrats swept out all the Republicans in the New Jersey State legislature and actually rescinded the 13th amendment.

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So New Jersey did not pass the 13th amendment, refused to take up the debate on the 14th or 15th amendments. There was a time in our State where we were called, rather than down south was called up north or down north, because we did have problems, even in the North, attempting to get basic things like 13th amendment abolishing slavery; 14th amendment, due process under the law; and 15th amendment, giving the right to vote to all citizens.

We still have to fight injustice. No one would think that our great Garden State, which today is such a leader in the right things, had such a spotted past and a troubled history.

I urge support of this resolution.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 158, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

The title was amended so as to read: "Resolution encouraging the people of the United States, particularly the youth of the United States, to observe the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the British slave trade and remember the life and legacy of William Wilberforce, a member of the British House of Commons who devoted his life to the suppression and abolition of the institution of slavery, and to work for the protection of human rights throughout the world".

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. PAYNE. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H. Res. 158.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

EXPRESSING SYMPATHY TO FAMILIES OF WOMEN AND GIRLS MURDERED IN GUATEMALA

Mr. SIRE. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 100) expressing the sympathy of the House of Representatives to the families of women and girls murdered in Guatemala and encouraging the Government of Guatemala to bring an end to these crimes.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 100

Whereas Guatemalan women were among the victims during the 36-year Guatemalan internal armed conflict which ended with the signing of the 1996 Peace Accords and ushered in the process of reconciliation;

Whereas since 2001, more than 2,000 women and girls have been murdered in Guatemala often preceded by abduction, sexual assault, or brutal mutilation;

Whereas from 2001 to 2006, the rate at which women and girls have been murdered in Guatemala has increased sharply, at a higher rate than the murder rate of men in Guatemala during the same period;

Whereas the number of murders of Guatemalan women and girls has increased significantly from 303 in 2001 to more than 500 in 2006;

Whereas, according to reports from Guatemalan officials, most of the victims are women ranging in age from 18 to 30 and many were abducted in broad daylight in well-populated areas;

Whereas the manner and rate of murders of Guatemalan women and girls suggests an increase in gender based killings, an extreme form of violence against women that can include torture, mutilation, and sexual violence;

Whereas, according to data from Guatemala's Public Prosecutors Office, few arrests and fewer convictions have taken place, leading to accusations that police, prosecutors, forensics experts, and other state justice officials have not brought the perpetrators to justice;

Whereas inadequate financial, human, and technical resources, as well as a lack of forensic and technical expertise, has complicated the arrest and prosecution of suspects;

Whereas the Guatemalan Human Rights Ombudsman reports that on ten separate occasions police officers have been implicated in the murder of Guatemalan women and girls and recommends that such officers and other officials be held accountable for their acts;

Whereas the Guatemalan Special Prosecutor for Crimes Against Women, in her statements regarding the Guatemalan murder cases, reported that her office has reviewed approximately 800 reports of domestic violence per month, with some of those cases ending in murder;

Whereas the Government of Guatemala has undertaken efforts to prevent violence against women, as evidenced by its ratification of the United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention of Belem do Para, and other international human rights treaties, and the enactment of laws and the creation of state institutions to promote and protect the rights of women;

Whereas, in June 2006, the Government of Guatemala successfully abolished the "Rape Law" which had absolved perpetrators of criminal responsibility for rape and certain other crimes of violence upon the perpetrator's marriage with the victim;

Whereas the Government of Guatemala has created special police and prosecutorial units to address the brutal murders of Guatemalan women and girls;

Whereas Guatemalan legislators from various parties have joined lawmakers from Mexico and Spain to form the Inter-parliamentary Network against "Femicide";

Whereas the Government of Guatemala and the United Nations recently signed an agreement to establish the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), which has a mandate to investigate and promote prosecution of illegal security groups and clandestine security organizations that function with impunity and are suspected of attacking human rights defenders, and other crimes that have undermined overall security in Guatemala;

Whereas murders of Guatemalan women and girls have brought pain to the families and friends of the victims as they struggle to cope with the loss of their loved ones and the fact that the perpetrators of these heinous acts remain unknown to the proper authorities; and

Whereas continuing impunity for the crime of murder is a threat to the rule of law, democracy, and stability in Guatemala: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) expresses its sincerest condolences and deepest sympathy to the families of women and girls murdered in Guatemala;

(2) expresses the solidarity of the people of the United States with the people of Guatemala

in the face of these tragic and senseless acts;

(3) condemns the ongoing abductions and murders of women and girls in Guatemala which have been occurring with increasing brutality and frequency;

(4) recognizes the courageous struggle of the victims' families in seeking justice for the victims;

(5) urges the Government of Guatemala to recognize domestic violence and sexual harassment as criminal acts;

(6) encourages the Government of Guatemala to act with due diligence in order to investigate promptly the killings of women and girls, prosecute those responsible, and eliminate the tolerance of violence against women;

(7) supports efforts to identify perpetrators and unknown victims through forensic analysis, including DNA testing, such as the National Institute for Forensic Science in Guatemala (INACIF) and encourages such efforts to be conducted by independent, impartial experts;

(8) urges the President and Secretary of State to continue to express support for the efforts of the victims' families and loved ones to seek justice for the victims, to express concern relating to the continued harassment of these families and the human rights defenders with whom they work, and to express concern with respect to impediments in the ability of the families to receive prompt and accurate information in their cases;

(9) encourages the Secretary of State to urge the Government of Guatemala to honor and dignify the victims of the brutal murders and to continue to include in the Department of State's annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices all instances of improper investigatory methods, threats against human rights activists, and the use of torture with respect to cases involving the murder and abduction of women and girls in Guatemala;

(10) encourages the Secretary of State to urge the Government of Guatemala to hold accountable those law enforcement and judicial officials whose failure to investigate and prosecute the murders adequately, whether through negligence, omission, or abuse, has led to impunity for these crimes;

(11) encourages the Secretary of State to support and urge the Government of Guatemala to take measures to ensure that the special Guatemalan police and prosecutorial units have an adequate number of appropriately trained personnel with sufficient resources to conduct thorough and proper investigations and prosecutions that reflect the gravity and magnitude of this national security crisis;

(12) recommends that the United States Ambassador to Guatemala continue to meet with the families of the victims, women's rights organizations, and Guatemalan officials responsible for investigating these crimes and preventing such future crimes; and

(13) recommends that the Secretary of State develop a comprehensive plan to address and combat the growing problem of violence against women in Latin America.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SIREs) and the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SIREs. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise

and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

Mr. SIREs. Madam Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution. I want to thank our colleague, Congresswoman HILDA SOLIS, the sponsor of this resolution, as well as original cosponsors, the Chair and the ranking member of the Western Hemisphere Subcommittee, ELIOT ENGEL and DAN BURTON, for bringing this issue to us.

This important resolution raises awareness of the increasing number of women and girls who have been brutally murdered in Guatemala. Since 2001, more than 2,000 women and girls have been killed in Guatemala, and the murder rate of women has increased sharply, more so than the rate for men.

Many of these murders are preceded by mutilation or sexual assault of the victims, and almost none of these cases are properly investigated or prosecuted. The fact that most of the murders go unpunished has contributed to the decline of overall security in Guatemala and demonstrates the dangerous situation for women and girls throughout the country.

While Guatemala has made some strides to improve the treatment of women under the law, there are still major obstacles for the country to overcome. For instance, domestic violence and sexual harassment are not considered crimes in Guatemala. This resolution condemns the murders, expresses sympathy and support for the struggle of victims' families for justice and urges that the murders be promptly investigated and prosecuted.

I hope that our two countries can work together to end the brutal murders of women and girls in Guatemala and to improve the security for all Guatemalans. I urge all my colleagues to support H. Res. 100.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I might consume.

First of all, I want to congratulate Representative SOLIS for introducing this bill. She and I have worked together on it, and I really appreciate her hard work. She is really concerned about the rights of women around the world and not just Guatemala. I appreciate that.

Let me start out by saying today we have heard a great deal about human rights violation, slavery and other issues. The problem is not confined just to one part of the world. In China today, as Representative SMITH of New Jersey has pointed out many times, there are as many as 10 million people suffering in communist gulags, and other parts of the world. In the Sudan,

we see the oppression and the horrible atrocities that are taking place and the mistreatment of not only men and women but children as well. It's just a horrible thing that we see these kinds of atrocities taking place around the world.

I really appreciate my colleagues on both sides of the aisle working so hard to focus attention on what's going on in these various areas to try to bring them to a halt. For humanity's sake, we can do no less.

I, however, today, rise in support of H. Res. 100, which recognizes and honors the women and girls who have been murdered in Guatemala. This bill brings to light the problem women in the democratic nation of Guatemala face in their daily struggle for survival. Given the current environment in Guatemala, women are not safe to walk along the streets day or night. A simple walk from home or school or work to mean abduction, mutilation or death for a Guatemalan woman or girl. Given the lack of legislative protection and judicial investigation, women are often subjected to domestic abuse, often leading to death within the home as well.

Given that there is nowhere for these victims or their families to turn, over 2,000, as has been said to my colleague, over 2,000 Guatemalan women and girls have suffered horrendous deaths in the past 5 years. Tremendous efforts have been taken by some Guatemalan legislators and human rights workers and families of the victims. They come here to Washington to try to end such atrocities by focusing attention on them.

There has been a continuous rise, however, in the brutal female deaths. There can be no rest of the weary as long as these things go on. We must come together to assist their effort and urge the government of Guatemala to take quick deliberative action to investigate the killings and prosecute those responsible and eliminate the tolerance, the tolerance of violence against women.

The women in Guatemala deserve to experience peace and prosperity within their nation and not constant fear of sexual assault and deadly mutilation, in just walking to and from work, as I said before.

I ask my colleagues to see the urgency of this bill, and to support it. Once again, Representative SOLIS, thanks for your hard work.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SIREN. Madam Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentlelady from California (Ms. SOLIS).

Ms. SOLIS. I would like to thank the gentleman and also take this time to acknowledge the support of Chairman LANTOS, Subcommittee Chairman ENGEL, Subcommittee Ranking Member BURTON, who is here, and Congresswoman BARBARA LEE, who are the original cosponsors of House Resolution 100, for their tireless work on this

issue. I urge all my colleagues to support this bipartisan resolution.

Madam Speaker, I know that we have heard much this afternoon about this predicament that exists in Guatemala. It has been going on for many, many years. This resolution that I introduced earlier this year would acknowledge the murders of 2,500 or more young women and girls that have been mutilated, attacked, assaulted and killed in Guatemala.

The murder rate for women and young women continues to rise there. It's as though there's a blind eye on the part of the government in Guatemala, as well as ours. That is why I brought this measure to the floor here. I think it is important that when a crime against a woman is done in any part of the world, it's a crime against all of us and humanity.

Therefore, I want to acknowledge the support of our colleagues, and especially for the hard work of the advocates, the groups that actually help to bring this issue before the Congress. They could have, at any time in the past 10 years, come and spoken to any Member of Congress about the issue. But the time wasn't right. Perhaps the politics, the environment, just wasn't fit for that. But now that we have seen resolutions come out of this House, where we worked on a bipartisan basis to deal with the issues of the women of Ciudad Juarez, and now we bring forward this issue.

Now we have more support on both sides of the aisle to say that the violence has to stop. There must not be impunity. Everyone should be held accountable. There needs to be transparency in government on the part of the Guatemalan Government, and on the part of our government as well, provide technical support, and also help to seek some resolution to the violence against these women that continues to go on.

I want to thank those groups that especially have worked hard with us to combat this particular crime. I would like to mention their names, Amnesty International, the Washington Office on Latin America, the Guatemala Human Rights Commission, Human Rights First, and, also, a group from my home area, CARECEN, the Central American Resource Center advocacy group based in Los Angeles.

They are strong supporters of House Resolution 100. Did you know, in fact, in the City of Los Angeles, this has one of the highest concentrations of Guatemalans. So many of them know distinctly how important this resolution is. They thank the Congress for bringing up this measure.

Madam Speaker, I include for the RECORD letters from CARECEN and 20 other advocacy groups that are also in support of this resolution.

DEAR CONGRESSMEMBER: We write to urge your support for H. Res. 100, which expresses sympathy to the families of women and girls murdered in Guatemala and encourages the Government of Guatemala to bring an end to these crimes.

Historically, the U.S. has offered asylum to those fleeing persecution based on race, religion, political opinion, national origin or membership in a particular social group. Only in the past decade have women and girls fleeing gender-based persecution (such as domestic violence, female genital cutting, human trafficking, "honor" killings, etc.) been recognized as refugees, but this remains an issue that is still widely debated.

There is no doubt that asylum is a life-saving form of protection, and recognition of gender-based claims is an important statement by the U.S. that it takes women's rights seriously. But asylum cannot be a solution to the underlying human rights problem. By definition, asylum seekers are forced to flee their home countries in order to save their lives and to escape persecution, but they leave behind many others who face the very same violations of their fundamental human rights—and who have no protection at all. Therefore, if we truly seek to address the problem at its source, we must examine the "root causes" of the violence and persecution that are forcing asylum seekers to flee in the first place. The story of Rodi Alvarado and Guatemala's femicides serve as a tragic case in point.

For more than a decade, Rodi Alvarado was brutalized by her husband, a former soldier in the Guatemalan military, and her repeated and desperate pleas for help from the police and courts were ignored. Ultimately, she had no other option but to flee for her life. Rodi's case—known as Matter of R.A.—has been pending for almost ten years, and although two successive Attorneys General—Janet Reno and John Ashcroft—"certified" the case to themselves, neither of them issued a definitive decision. In 2001, the immigration agency proposed regulations clarifying that domestic violence and other related harms could form the basis of an asylum claim. However, those regulations have yet to be finalized, and the lives of women like Rodi Alvarado, who have sought asylum in the U.S., continue to hang in the balance.

We ask you to strongly urge Attorney General Gonzales and Department of Homeland Security Secretary Chertoff to issue regulations which would clearly recognize that women in circumstances such as Rodi Alvarado qualify for protection as refugees. This would send a clear message that women and girls fleeing gender-persecution will find a safe haven in the U.S.

Advancing protective U.S. asylum law is critical, but equally important is addressing the root causes that force women to flee their home countries. In Rodi Alvarado's case, these causes are an epidemic of violence against Guatemalan women; more than 3,000 women and girls have been murdered since 2000. These gender-motivated killings or "femicides" are notable both for their brutality and for the virtual impunity of those responsible. The most recent available statistics reveal the abysmal failure of the Guatemalan government to effectively investigate, prosecute, and punish those who carry out these horrific crimes. Only 17 murders of women—of the thousands that have been committed—have been prosecuted.

Guatemala's femicides demonstrate the lack of any meaningful protection for women like Rodi Alvarado, who are left with no other choice than to flee for their lives. Unless and until the Guatemalan government reforms its justice system such that there is an end to impunity that exists for those who commit this violence, hundreds more women will lose their lives, while others will be forced to flee in order to save them.

As a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, we ask you to play a critical role in resolving the root causes of gender-

based violence and persecution in Guatemala by co-sponsoring H. Res. 100.

Sincerely,

The Center for Gender & Refugee Studies (CGRS); Central American Resource Center (CARECEN); Guatemala Human Rights Commission; Foundation for Human Rights in Guatemala; Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala; Movement of Guatemalan Immigrants in the United States (MIGUA); National Coalition of Guatemalan Immigrants (CONGUATE); Guatemala Solidarity Committee of Boston; National Alliance of Latin American and Caribbean Communities (NALACC); United Latinos in Massachusetts (LUMA);

Salvadoran American Nacional Network (SANN); Harvard Immigration and Refugee Clinic; University of Texas School of Law Immigration Clinic; Legal Momentum; STITCH; Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights; Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center, Inc.; Albuquerque Center for Peace and Justice; El CENTRO de Igualdad y Derechos; Casa de Esperanza; Asylum Access; and American Friends Service Committee Immigrant Rights Program.

While I close, I would like to say that while the violence may continue momentarily, I think we have caught the attention of policymakers, not just in Guatemala, but in other parts of the hemisphere, because not only are we looking at setting a standard here, but we are letting people know that we are on watch, and that America will take their place, as we always have, in providing leadership.

I thank our chairperson for this committee. I thank the gentleman. I thank our ranking member on the other side of the aisle and all of those groups that helped to support this resolution.

Mr. SIREs. Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlelady from California (Ms. WOOLSEY), a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Ms. WOOLSEY. I would like to thank my colleague from California (Ms. SOLIS) for introducing this bill. I would like to thank Chairman LANTOS for working to bring it to the floor as quickly as he did.

Madam Speaker, one of the top priorities of this 110th Congress has been to protect women's rights and to prevent violence against them. That is why I am particularly proud to be a cosponsor of this resolution, H. Res. 100, a resolution that brings the same kind of commitment to the women and girls of Guatemala. The supporters of H. Res. 100 are speaking loudly against the systematic abuse and sexual violence that the women and girls of Guatemala face.

Since the year 2001, 2,000 women and girls have been murdered. We are saying that it's beyond time for the Guatemalan government to stand up against these inexcusable and inhumane acts. They are acts of violence, and they must punish the offenders. We want them to put the resources necessary toward providing for investigations and for DNA testing.

Today, with this resolution, this Congress stands up and offers more than our condolences. We offer our support. We stand with the women and the girls of Guatemala, and we pledge to bring

safety and justice to them. We want their government to work with us to that end.

Mr. SIREs. Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey's 10th Congressional District, chairman of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health, my good friend DON PAYNE.

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Mr. PAYNE. Madam Speaker, let me thank the prime sponsor, Ms. SOLIS, for introducing this very important House Resolution 100, expressing the sympathy of the House of Representatives to the families of women and girls murdered in Guatemala, and encouraging the Government of Guatemala to bring an end to these crimes.

Let me commend Ms. SOLIS from California, not only for the women in Guatemala but she has actually expressed concerns for the deaths of women in Mexico. We have had discussions with Ms. SOLIS about the murders on the border of the United States and Mexico where women have been killed and there are a tremendous number of unsolved crimes there, and she visited that community in Mexico to express our concern for the women of that region and that country. So this is simply an extension of the work that she has done so well on behalf of women not only here in this country but throughout the world.

As we know, since 2001 more than 2,000 women and girls have been murdered in Guatemala, often preceded by abductions, sexual assault, or brutal mutilation. The murder rate has continued to increase and has grown from 2001 where there were 303 reported to more than 500 in 2006. And so we have asked the Government of Guatemala and actually the United Nations, and they recently signed an agreement to establish the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala, which has a mandate to investigate and promote prosecution of illegal security groups and clandestine security organizations that function with impunity and are suspected of attacking human rights defenders and other crimes that have undermined the overall security in Guatemala.

So when we look to Guatemala and we express our sincerest condolences to the families of these women and girls, we must look at the condition of women throughout the world, even here in the United States. At a recent hearing last week of the Education and Labor Committee, we find that women make 82 cents on the dollar compared to what men make. And the sad part is that, as women progress in their years of work, the gap between men and women actually expands because they start at a lower base. Men's salaries go up, women's salaries remain stagnant, and the gap becomes even greater.

So as we remember the women of Guatemala, let's remember that there is still gender bias throughout the world.

Mr. SIREs. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlelady from California's Ninth District, a member of the

Committee on Appropriations, BARBARA LEE.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman for yielding and for your leadership, and just say today that I fully support and am a cosponsor of this resolution, and want to thank Congresswoman SOLIS for staying on point and continuing to focus and make sure that this House of Representatives understands the type of torture and violence that is taking place with regard to Guatemalan women.

As the resolution says, the murders of Guatemalan women and girls have increased significantly, from 303 to more than 500 in 2006. Since 2001, unfortunately, more than 2,500 women and girls have been killed. So it is up to us, I believe, to make sure that we as a neighbor to Guatemala, as people who care about women and girls, that we urge the Guatemalan Government to do some of the things that have been put forth in this resolution.

First, of course, we extend our sincere condolences and deepest sympathies to the families of the women and the girls who have been murdered in Guatemala. But also we have to do more than just extend our sympathy and express solidarity. We have to do what this resolution says. Let me just mention a couple of those things that we need to do.

We need to urge the Government of Guatemala to recognize domestic violence and sexual harassment as criminal acts. Nothing less than that will do. We need to make sure that our Secretary of State works with the Government of Guatemala to hold those accountable for their crimes. We need to make sure that the ambassador continues to meet with the families and the victims of the women and girls. We also need to make sure, and this resolution calls upon our Secretary of State, to develop a comprehensive plan to address and combat the growing problem of violence against women in Latin America.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. SIREs, because this is such an important effort for women and girls, not only in Guatemala and Latin America, but for women and girls throughout the world.

Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res. 100, to express sympathy to the families of women and girls murdered in Guatemala. The senseless atrocities being committed in Guatemala are a grim reminder of the injustices that plague women and girls throughout the world. It is imperative that we speak out as a nation against these malicious acts, which demonstrate an utter lack of respect for human life.

These irrational acts of violence targeted against women are not just a looming problem in Guatemala. Femicide has afflicted other countries in the world, but our attention turns to Guatemala as the most recent and serious case of negligence by government officials. According to reports, 40 percent of killings were never investigated or the investigations

were simply shelved. This pattern of impunity by the Guatemalan Government cultivates and perpetuates the cycle of violence.

It has taken pressure from the international community to highlight this gross violation of human rights and force the Guatemalan Government to take steps towards alleviating these problems. Guatemalan officials have recently created a special police commission and prosecutorial unit to solely focus on femicide crimes.

Although these are important and necessary steps, more must be done to address these issues.

It is necessary for this House to focus our attention to Guatemala's passive attitude. This is why I urge my colleagues to join me in voting "yes" on H. Res. 100.

Mr. SIREs. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LYNCH). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SIREs) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 100.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

CALLING ON VIETNAM TO IMMEDIATELY AND UNCONDITIONALLY RELEASE POLITICAL PRISONERS AND PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

Mr. SIREs. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 243) calling on the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to immediately and unconditionally release Father Nguyen Van Ly, Nguyen Van Dai, Le Thi Cong Nhan, and other political prisoners and prisoners of conscience, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 243

Whereas, on February 18, 2007, Vietnamese police raided the parish house of Father Nguyen Van Ly and confiscated computers, telephones, more than 100 mobile phone cards, and more than 200 kilograms of documents;

Whereas the police moved Father Ly to the remote location of Ben Cui in central Vietnam, where he is under house arrest;

Whereas Father Ly is a former prisoner of conscience, having spent a total of over 13 years in prison since 1983 for his advocacy of religious freedom and democracy in Vietnam;

Whereas Father Ly is an advisor of "Block 8406", a democracy movement that started in April 2006 when hundreds of people throughout Vietnam signed public petitions calling for democracy and human rights;

Whereas Father Ly is also an advisor of a new political party, the Vietnam Progression Party, and one of the primary editors of "Freedom of Speech" magazine;

Whereas, on March 6, 2007, Vietnamese police arrested one of Vietnam's few practicing human rights lawyers, Nguyen Van Dai, who

has defended individuals arrested for their human rights and religious activities, is the co-founder of the Committee for Human Rights in Vietnam, and is one of the principal organizers of the Block 8406 democracy movement;

Whereas, on March 6, 2007, Vietnamese police also arrested Le Thi Cong Nhan, a human rights lawyer, a member of "Block 8406", the principal spokesperson for the Progression Party, and a founder of the Vietnamese Labor Movement;

Whereas Father Ly, Nguyen Van Dai, and Le Thi Cong Nhan have been charged with disseminating propaganda against the Socialist Republic of Vietnam under article 88 of the Penal Code of Vietnam;

Whereas Father Ly was tried and convicted on March 30, 2007, and sentenced to 8 years in prison;

Whereas if convicted, Nguyen Van Dai and Le Thi Cong could be sentenced to up to 20 years in prison;

Whereas Le Quoc Quan is a lawyer who traveled to the United States in September 2006 to research civil society development as a Reagan-Fascell Fellow at the National Endowment for Democracy;

Whereas Le Quoc Quan returned to Vietnam in early March 2007 and was arrested by Hanoi police on March 8, 2007;

Whereas Le Quoc Quan has been charged under Article 79 of the Penal Code of Vietnam which prohibits activities aimed at overthrowing the Government and carries extremely severe prison terms and even the death penalty;

Whereas in none of their activities have Father Ly, Nguyen Van Dai, Le Thi Cong Nhan, or Le Quoc Quan advocated or engaged in violence;

Whereas the arrest of and charges against Father Ly, Nguyen Van Dai, Le Thi Cong Nhan, and Le Quoc Quan violate Article 69 of the Vietnamese Constitution, which states that "The citizen shall enjoy freedom of opinion and speech, freedom of the press, the right to be informed and the right to assemble, form associations and hold demonstrations in accordance with the provisions of the law";

Whereas Father Ly, Nguyen Van Dai, Le Thi Cong Nhan, and Le Quoc Quan have been arrested and charged in contravention of the rights enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) to which Vietnam is a state party, specifically Article 18 (freedom of religion), Article 19 (freedom of expression) and Article 22 (freedom of association);

Whereas Vietnam recently has imprisoned, detained, placed under house arrest, or otherwise restricted numerous other peaceful democratic and religious activists for reasons related to their political or religious views, including Nguyen Binh Thanh, Nguyen Phong, Nguyen Ngoc Quang, Nguyen Vu Binh, Huynh Trung Dao, Nguyen Tan Hoanh, Tran Thi Le Hang, Doang Huy Chuong, Doan Van Dien, Le Ba Triet, Nguyen Tuan, Bui Kim Thanh and Tran Quoc Hien;

Whereas the United States Congress agreed to Vietnam becoming an official member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2006, amidst assurances that the Vietnamese Government was steadily improving its human rights record and would continue to do so;

Whereas the group of Asian countries at the United Nations have nominated Vietnam as the sole regional candidate for a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council for the 2008-2009 biennium, and pursuant to the United Nations Charter, Vietnam would be required to discharge its duties in accordance with the purposes of the United Nations, including the promotion and

encouragement of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all; and

Whereas the arbitrary imprisonment and the violation of the human rights of citizens of Vietnam are sources of continuing, grave concern to Congress, and the arrests of Father Ly, Nguyen Van Dai, Le Thi Cong Nhan, and Le Quoc Quan are part of a trend toward increasing oppression of human rights advocates in Vietnam: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That—

(1) the House of Representatives—

(A) condemns and deplores the arbitrary arrests of Father Nguyen Van Ly, Nguyen Van Dai, Le Thi Cong Nhan, and Le Quoc Quan by the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and calls for their immediate and unconditional release and the dropping of all criminal charges, and for the immediate and unconditional release of all other political and religious prisoners;

(B) condemns and deplores the violations of the freedoms of speech, religion, movement, association, and the lack of due process afforded to individuals in Vietnam;

(C) challenges the qualifications of Vietnam to be a member of the United Nations Security Council, unless the Government of Vietnam begins immediately to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms for all within its own borders; and

(D) strongly urges the Government of Vietnam to consider the implications of its actions for the broader relationship between the United States and Vietnam; and

(2) it is the sense of the House of Representatives that the United States should—

(A) make a top concern the immediate release, legal status, and humanitarian needs of Father Nguyen Van Ly, Nguyen Van Dai, Le Thi Cong Nhan, and Le Quoc Quan;

(B) use funds from the newly created Human Rights Defenders Fund of the Department of State to assist with the legal defense and the needs of the families and dependents of Father Ly, Nguyen Van Dai, Le Thi Cong Nhan, and Le Quoc Quan;

(C) continue to urge the Government of Vietnam to comply with internationally recognized standards for basic freedoms and human rights;

(D) make clear to the Government of Vietnam that it must adhere to the rule of law and respect the freedom of religion and expression in order to broaden its relations with the United States;

(E) make clear to the Government of Vietnam that the detention of Father Ly, Nguyen Van Dai, Le Thi Cong Nhan, Le Quoc Quan, and other political prisoners and prisoners of conscience and other human rights violations are not in the best interest of Vietnam because they create obstacles to improved bilateral relations and cooperation with the United States;

(F) examine current human rights violations by the Vietnamese Government and consider re-imposing on Vietnam the "country of particular concern" (CPC) designation, which was removed on November 13, 2006, pursuant to the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998; and

(G) in order to advance these freedoms and rights, and to strengthen the long-term relationship between the United States and Vietnam, initiate new foreign assistance programs to advance the capacity and networking abilities of Vietnamese civil society, including—

(i) rule of law programs to train Vietnamese human rights lawyers, judges, academics, and students about international human rights law;

(ii) public diplomacy initiatives to inform and teach Vietnamese citizens about international human rights norms and responsibilities; and